

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL
Play Area Working Group
Meeting Notes
Of the Meeting
Held on
Friday 2 December 2022, 10.00am
Via Zoom

In attendance.

Cllr Samantha Bowring
Cllr Gabby Barody
Cllr Jim Halliday
Cllr Lorraine Oates

Also, in attendance.

Karen Crowhurst – Locum Project Officer
Tim Badcock – Cemetery and Outdoor Services Manager

AGENDA

1. **To Elect a Chair for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year**

Cllr Halliday proposed for Cllr Barody be appointed as Chair, this was seconded by Cllr Oates. Cllr Barody accepted the proposal and was therefore, Cllr Barody was duly elected as Chair to the Play Areas Working Group. All were in favour.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence

3. **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of interests were received.

4. **To consider replacement or renewals of play equipment for play areas in Abingdon**

Request Committee to set a date for the meeting of the working group as soon as possible to agree officer proposals in order to go out to tender (Decision made 22nd September 2022 T2 Review of play areas)

a) To prioritise which play areas require replacement or renewal of play equipment

After a short discussion regarding costs, budget allocations, potential funding, reasons for the delay, and lack of a plan. As well as receiving advice to ensure that each play area meets the needs of the age range of users. The meeting moved to Cllr Halliday sharing a report with information collated in June 2021 which identified potential work, improvements, and recommendations of new play equipment which could be installed in the play areas under the Councils responsibilities.

Members went through each play area and agreed various recommendations.

Boxhill Play Area

Report recommendations

Range of play equipment - aimed at lower and middle childhood age. Just wondered if it might be possible to install something else for older children. The park at Millbrook in Grove has some excellent examples of equipment for older children.

- There is currently only one area of seating at the play equipment end - this is situated at the side of the park backing onto Abbott Rd. Given the bumps in the ground, it's possible a parent may not be able to see younger children on the roundabout from there. So, could we think about installing another bench seat perpendicular to the path through the woods, further up in the section with the roundabout?
- Floor area in shelter needs improvement.
- Basket swing
- Consider installing something for older children - users suggested a large slide, or a zip wire and cited the Castle Play Area in Wallingford as a good example.

The COASM advised that the Bench has now been installed as well as a Teen Shelter. Tim also advised that it would be possible to install a Basket Swing on the far side near the Football Club building.

The possibility of a zip wire was discussed. It was advised that this would not be feasible in this area. Members agreed to the advice,

A Castle style piece of equipment could be installed. It was advised that this would be a removal of already installed equipment rather than an addition.

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A large slide was also discussed, however there is a lack of provision of large slides and space is limited.

The work to the ground can proceed by the maintenance team. **Action-COSM**

Members agreed that the status of this play area would be considered as a major project to propose at the next Environment and Amenities Committee and noted that there is limited room for expansion.

Caldecott Play Area

Report recommendations

- Basket swing
- The old climbing frame doesn't look very interesting perhaps something more challenging.
- Users liked the openness and came from afar to use it - suggestions included Monkey bars (very popular choice amongst children asked), "bouncers" (as at the Abbey), a sunken-into-the ground trampoline, bigger swings (as at Blewbury), an additional bench for parents, and that consideration to extending the fenced
- Consider installing exercise equipment around the field

This area was discussed. Cllr Bowring expressed concerns regarding the lack of provision of equipment for this area to reach all.

Basket Swing.

It was agreed that this is deliverable and feasible. This will require extending the area and providing some separation.

The old climbing frames

It was advised that this piece of equipment could be replaced with something smaller and something else can be installed for teenagers to use which could incorporate monkey bars. Bouncers could be installed in this financial year as they are not very expensive and there is some budget allocation.

Sunken Trampolines

It was advised that these are not viable for various reasons, including the need for continuous maintenance.

Items not in the report

Dirt Hill

It was advised that this is something which could be created by the Maintenance Team.

Multi Pitch -MUGA

It was recommended that this be looked at holistically and consider the demographics of the area particularly as the area is mainly used by younger people. It was agreed that this could be a deliverable and feasibly project moving forward but will require a lot of consideration, including the siting of the pitch.

Rockers

It was agreed that these could be installed and not be included in the project.

Self-closing gates

The matter of installing self-closing gates was discussed. The COASM agreed to obtain quotations for all areas to try and obtain best value for money.

It was agreed that except for installing rockers, and a mound/dirt hill. Members agreed that the status of this play area should be considered as a major project.

River Close

Report recommendations

- Basket swing
- Roundabout
- Place a waste bin near to seat.

Members considered this area and agreed that whilst space is available for the above pieces of equipment the area is fit for purpose and does not require any further action.

Masefield Crescent

Report recommendations

- There is no fenced area here
- It's very exposed could have some sort of shelter.
- Large climbing/adventure structure
- Consider installing exercise equipment around the field (though note that equipment is already at Chaunterell Way which is not too far away)
- Consider installing another bench/seat for parents - perhaps by the field boundary so it overlooks all the eqpt

It was agreed that there is no need for fencing. It was also agreed that the installation of a shelter would be deliverable, and an addition of a large climbing/adventure structure would be an excellent addition to the area, particularly as there is plenty of space for this type of item. The installation of exercise equipment was discussed, it was agreed that this would probably be underutilised. It was agreed due to the size of the equipment proposed that this play area would need to be considered as a major project.

Chaunterell Way

Report recommendations

- This one did have quite a dismal feel.
- It appears quite small for the area could be bigger.
- Didn't like the stand-up roundabout, prefer the type on Boxhill.
- Consider installing An "in-the-ground" trampoline
- (Noted the ground area underneath the roundabout is badly worn)

All the items in the recommendation were discussed it was agreed that the roundabout is partly worn but does not pose a risk. It was also agreed that an in-ground trampoline would not be appropriate. The groundwork required will be addressed by the maintenance team. **Action-COSM**

Hill View

Report recommendations

- Not much room for improvement unless we could use the area outside the fencing and have a large fort-type climbing structure.

Item(s) not in the report

- Dirt hill/mounds

It was agreed that as the above play area is not hugely used as a nearby play area is more used, not to replace or add any further equipment. It was agreed that a couple of dirt hill/mounds could be added.

Elizabeth Avenue

Report recommendations

- Basket swing
- No gate

Members agreed that there is not enough space to accommodate a Basket Swing, and as there is no requirement to install a gate not to propose any actions for this play area.

Chilton Close

- Consider enlarging play area - to include another bench and a range of items for small children (the area is well used by families before and after the school delivery)

Members were advised that enlarging the play area has already taken place and there is currently a good range of facilities. Members agreed not to pursue any actions going forward.

General

- Generally, the play areas are well kept, no litter, and the equipment all looked at least serviceable.
- The swings whilst mostly mechanically ok do look a little tired.
- Some of the gate bolts are either missing or not particularly nice to use.
- Comment from an adult - if a zip wire is installed could it have an incline as some appear to be horizontal which requires parents to "help"

Members noted the general comments and the maintenance contained within the comments will be carried out by the maintenance team. – **Acton COSM**

- b) To agree Officer proposals to recommend to the Environment Amenities and Advisory Committee or Full Council for approval

After a short discussion it was agreed that the follow recommendations to be taken to the Environment and Amenities Committee

- 1) The Committee needs to work towards a five-year plan for replacement and installation of new equipment for all the above areas.
- 2) That the play areas listed below are categorised as Major Projects and should be included in the five-year plan to deliver one major project per year

Boxhill
Caldecott
Maesfield Crescent

- 3) The Committee to agree which area should be worked upon first.
 - 4) For quotations to be considered for all the gates in the play areas to be changed to self-closing gates.
 - 5) To list all the actions arising from the above for inclusion in the Forward Plan.
- c) To agree the procurement process for approval at an Environment Amenities and Advisory Committee for approval.

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The Officers recommendation is to carry out the project in small phases in order not to have to go through the procurement process. The Financial Regulations allow for amounts over £50,000 to trigger the process. It was agreed that the costs be discussed at the next Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee meeting.

5. **Next steps**

Covered above.

6. **Date of next meeting**

It was agreed that there is no need to hold a further meeting as all decisions will be made at committee level.